



House of Commons Education Committee

Services for Young People: the Government response: Government response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2010–12

Tenth Special Report of Session 2010–12

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The Education Committee

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Tenth Special Report

On 11 October 2011 we published our Sixth Report of the session, *Services for young people: the Government response*.¹ The response from the Government was received on 19 December 2011 and is published as an Appendix to this report.

The Committee's recommendations are in **bold** text and the responses are in plain text.

Appendix

Government response

The Education Committee published on 11 October 2011 a second report following its inquiry into “services beyond the schools/college day for young people, primarily those aged 13-25”. This document sets out the Government's response to the Committee's report. The responses reflect *Positive for Youth*—a new approach to cross-Government policy for young people aged 13-19, published on 19 December 2011.

1. We recommend that the Government actively endorse the outcomes framework being developed by the Catalyst consortium, and make clear to youth services that it expects them to use it unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.

At every level, it is crucial that policy and services for young people are focused on improving outcomes for young people:

At a national level—Without creating any new burdens on local areas, the Government will publish annually a national data set that is more focused on positive outcomes than any previous set of performance measures. These data will indicate overall progress; they will not be used as a centralised performance or accountability framework for local areas.

At a local level—The Government expects local areas to define their own measures to demonstrate their progress in improving outcomes for local young people. It will not prescribe to commissioners and providers the outcomes they should use. However, *Positive for Youth* makes clear that it wants the quality of services to be judged by good outcomes as well as reductions in poor outcomes.

At a provider level—The Government wants to see commissioners and providers of services for young people focusing more strongly on results. It is funding Catalyst to develop its outcomes framework with the ambition that it will become an ‘industry

¹ Education Committee. Sixth Report of Session 2010–12, *Services for young people: the Government response*, HC 1501

standard' common language with which to measure and demonstrate the impact of provision.

There will naturally be different issues in play and different indicators available at each of these three levels, so it would not be appropriate to expect the outcomes used to be identical. However, the Government is encouraging a common approach by setting out a proposed set of national-level indicators in *Positive for Youth* so that local areas can review it in deciding what indicators they want to use locally. Catalyst have also had early sight of these indicators to factor these into their work.

Catalyst's framework will highlight the importance of personal and social development outcomes for young people. It will aim to develop greater awareness of the evidence that links a number of key personal capabilities (such as confidence and agency, or resilience and determination) to key longer-term outcomes such as those relating to educational attainment and employment. The framework will signpost investors, funders, commissioners, and providers to a range of tools that can be used to measure progress in developing these capabilities. In doing so, it is hoped that they can have more confidence in focusing on personal and social development outcomes, and be more specific in demonstrating and articulating impact.

The Government will not require use of the framework because, in line with its wider approach to trusting professionals, it believes providers and commissioners are best placed to judge its utility. However the Government will actively endorse and promote the framework if it delivers on the ambitions that it and the sector have for it.

2. We recommend that the Government set out the grounds on which it will judge a local authority to have failed to provide sufficient services, and in what ways Ministers will act to secure improvement in such circumstances. In this context, we underline our finding that some local authority youth services have already closed altogether. We also recommend that an explanation of the grounds for intervention by Ministers be included in the revised, shortened guidance being drawn up by the Government.

The Government is not aware of any local authority that has ceased to commission services for young people. It is a matter for councils to decide which services can be made available with little or no public funding and which need to be commissioned with public funding. It also for them to decide whether the particular services they do decide to fund, such as youth work, are delivered directly or via funding to third parties. The Government will not deem councils to be failing against their duties simply because they decide not to commission an in-house youth service.

The Government will consult shortly, including with young people, on new statutory guidance on local authorities' duty to secure sufficient leisure-time educational and recreational leisure-time activities for the improvement of the wellbeing of 13-19 year

olds so far as is reasonably practicable². This will be much more streamlined and set out much clearer expectations than the existing guidance produced by the previous Government.

The new guidance, which will reflect Ofsted's recent report on commissioning young people's services³, will emphasise that the Government looks to local authorities to publish their own local offer of services to young people. It will, however, set out the Government's expectation that all local authorities work with young people and other agencies to:

- assess the needs of their local youth population;
- consider how aspirational personal and social development programmes, youth work, and youth workers can contribute to delivering their priorities;
- agree priorities for services and how they can be delivered most effectively and efficiently;
- determine which services need specific public funding and which can be secured through other routes so that public funding is targeted primarily on young people at risk of poor outcomes;
- consider which providers are best placed to deliver public services, and how to grow the overall role of the voluntary sector; and
- publicise the overall local offer of services and involve young people in giving feedback on their quality.

Ministers want to see a decisive shift in accountability for service improvement away from central Government towards self-driven improvement by local authorities themselves, supported by the sector. It is the responsibility of every council to secure adequate services and to drive improvements to services where necessary. Where support is necessary, local authorities generally regard help from their peers in other local authorities as the best form of support. Whenever there is a concern about performance, councils should explore what support is available through, for example, the Children's Improvement Board.

Ministers are clear, however, that they will act to secure improvement where there is evidence of significant or long-standing failure, or where there is evidence that local authorities have been unable to improve on their own, or with the support that has been available to them. Ministers would need to look at any concerns on a case by case basis, taking into account:

- the local authority's performance relative to similar areas and data such as proportions of young people in education, employment or training and other measures such as youth crime and teenage pregnancy rates;

² Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 - introduced through Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

³ An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services, 2011

- feedback from young people on the adequacy and quality of services;
- the extent to which the local authority has had regard to statutory guidance; and
- the willingness and capacity of the local authority for self-improvement drawing on sector led support.

Critical or enduring underperformance may necessitate statutory intervention, whereby the Secretary of State is able to direct a local authority using powers in section 497A of the Education Act 1996 (as applied to children's social care by section 50 of the Children Act 2004) to take whatever action is deemed expedient to achieve necessary improvement. However, more usually, Ministers would use non-statutory intervention, raising concerns in writing, visiting areas in question and issuing an Improvement Notice, working in collaboration with the Children's Improvement Board wherever possible.

3. We find it inadequate for the Government to dismiss our estimate of public spending on youth services, which is based on its own figures, without explaining in more detail why it has done so and without providing its own estimate. The Government should provide us with its own assessment of annual public spending on youth services for each of the ten years prior to introduction of the Early Intervention Grant in April this year.

The Government is not dismissing the Committee's figures for the last 10 years' spending by local authorities on their youth services. However it believes that to undertake a legitimate comparison of per capita spending between school and out-of-school services to young people in 2009–10, as the Committee's report sought to do, it is fair to take account of all local authority spend on services to young people and not only spend on the Youth Service itself.

For example local authorities spend significant sums on positive activities; information, advice and guidance; teenage pregnancy; substance misuse; and discretionary support for young people. If these are taken into account Section 251 returns indicate gross spend by local authorities on services to young people in 2009–10 of £1,104m, compared with the £350m figure used in the Committee's report—a significant difference.

4. We invite the Government to clarify whether or not it intends to include the Committee's practical recommendations on commissioning in its revised guidance for local authorities; and if not, for what reasons.

The Government will consult shortly, including with young people, on new statutory guidance on local authorities' duty to secure sufficient leisure-time educational and recreational leisure-time activities for the improvement of the wellbeing of 13 to 19 year olds, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The extent to which the draft guidance will reflect the Committee's four specific recommendations is set out below.

“First, rather than simply continuing to commission those services currently being provided, local authorities should undertake a thorough review of what their young people want and need, avoiding duplication and waste and taking into account what is already being provided by other agencies.”

Positive for Youth sets out the Government’s belief that it is the role of local commissioners to make decisions on the priority needs to address. They should do so bearing in mind all of their relevant statutory duties including their duty to secure access to sufficient leisure time activities, as well as their duties to ensure participation in education, employment or training; to produce needs assessments for health and wellbeing and for child poverty; and to produce a Youth Justice Plan.

It emphasises that local authorities will want to work together with other statutory partners such as health commissioners, the new Police and Crime Commissioners and Youth Offending Teams as well as with voluntary organisations and young people, their families, and communities, to develop a shared and integrated view of the root causes of local issues and hence the priority needs to address.

It notes that there are benefits to local authorities and other commissioners including schools and colleges working together to co-ordinate investment, design integrated services, and maximise the utilisation of and impact from available resources. This includes making the most of the facilities available within the community—whether schools, libraries or community facilities, etc, as place for young people to go and from which to offer integrated or co-located services. Working together to plan services strategically around young people’s needs rather than legacy structures, can help to reduce duplication between different services, reduce costs, and deliver a more coordinated and coherent offer of support.

It states that good commissioning will take into account and seek to maximise the contribution of non-publicly-funded services and facilities, volunteering, and philanthropic giving where possible. It will also aim to grow the capacity of communities to support their own young people, and look at the current and potential range of providers, including those in the voluntary sector, and seeks to grow their capacity to develop a more diverse and vibrant provider market.

The draft revised statutory guidance will reflect this position and the fact that the duty contains a specific requirement for local authorities to ascertain and take account of assess the needs of young people.

“Second, the outcomes against which services are commissioned must include positive as well as deficit indicators.”

Positive for Youth sets out how the Government wants young people’s outcomes and the quality of services for young people to be judged by positive indicators of success rather than measures of reductions in poor outcomes.

It states that at a national level, without creating any new burdens on local areas, the Government will publish annually a data set that is more focused on positive outcomes than any previous set of performance measures. These data will indicate overall progress; they will not constitute a centralised performance or accountability framework for local areas, nor a required set of outcomes against which to commission local services.

Positive for Youth makes clear that the Government looks to local areas to define their own measures to demonstrate their progress in improving outcomes for local young people—using positive measures of success wherever possible. The draft revised statutory guidance will reflect this.

“Third, local authorities should encourage partnerships bids, particularly those which mix large bodies which are well-known and have the capacity to invest in collecting management information, with smaller, community-based providers.”

Positive for Youth recognises the valuable role that many small community-based organisations play in the lives of young people. The Government believes that good commissioners will seek to grow the capacity of communities to support their own young people independent of public funding, and to grow the capacity of their local market of potential providers of public services—including growing the capacity and role of the voluntary and community sector.

However, the Government does not believe that it is its role to prescribe to local authorities the nature of the providers that they should be encouraging to bid for publicly funded services. This requirement will therefore not be included in the revised draft statutory guidance.

“Finally, Government should require local authorities to set out how they will involve young people in commissioning decisions, whether in representative roles, such as young mayors, or through processes such as participatory budgeting. The evidence we received suggested that such involvement can not only empower young people, but also enhance the effectiveness of spending decisions.”

Positive for Youth demonstrates that the Government wholeheartedly shares the Committee’s view that young people have a vital role to play at every stage of the commissioning process to inform ongoing decisions about the local offer of services for them. This includes identifying priority needs and helping shape both policy and the delivery of services. This is as true for health, transport, and youth justice services as much as it is for local authority funded services for young people. It is essential that the voice of young people that is heard through youth participation arrangements reflects the diversity of local young people and their experiences, and the views and needs of those who may not otherwise have their voice heard.

Involving young people does not only lead to better decisions and a greater sense of ownership by young people. It also offers an opportunity to those engaged directly for personal and social development and the development of skills for employment and

further education. It also sends a clear message about the valued and positive place of young people in their community.

The revised draft statutory guidance will make clear the Government's expectation that every local area should establish and maintain arrangements for ensuring that the voice of young people is heard in local decision making and that young people have a role in inspecting and reporting on the quality of service delivery.

There are many ways to do this and the Government does not mind what approach is used. This could be through a youth council, youth cabinet, youth mayor, or young inspectors programme or through local members or the UK Youth Parliament. Health and Wellbeing Boards or Local HealthWatch will provide opportunities for young people to influence health decisions.

In line with its wider approach to reducing bureaucratic requirements, the Government will not require local authorities to publish statements or report on how they will do this.

5. We remain concerned about the potential impact of charging for National Citizen Service and ask the Government to evaluate and report back to us in due course what impact, if any, charging has had on participation as part of its evaluation of the 2011 pilot.

Most National Citizen Service pilots in 2011 either did not charge young people to participate, or charged only a deposit that was refunded to the young person once they had participated. The Government has no intention that any young person should be deterred from participating in National Citizen Service on financial grounds.

The National Centre for Social Research has been appointed to evaluate 2011 and 2012 National Citizen Service pilots. It is currently analysing data collected from 2011 pilot providers, including the impact of charging for participation, specifically on those young people that may come from disadvantaged backgrounds. An interim evaluation report is due to be published in early 2012 and the Education Select Committee will be sent a copy.

6. We request that the Government (i) clarify whether or not it intends to cease funding National Citizen Service altogether beyond the pilot years, and (ii) set out what it has learnt from the 2011 pilot with regard to the rate of take-up amongst 16-year olds and consequent likely costs in future years.

On (i), the Government has no plans to cease funding for National Citizen Service beyond the pilot years. Work is underway to plan for the roll out of the programme to meet the Prime Minister's commitment to make 90,000 places available in 2014.

On (ii), over 8,000 young people participated in National Citizen Service pilots in 2011. These pilots offered a limited number of places to young people in a limited number of areas across the country. This enabled the programme's model to be tested and lessons

to be identified to inform future direction. From this limited initial pilot it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the future level of demand from young people for the programme once it is expanded and well established, and the Government has not yet come to a firm view on future take-up although initial feedback from 2011 participants has been very positive.

There will be an interim evaluation of the 2011 pilots published in spring 2012. The 2012 pilot providers are already drawing lessons from the experience of 2011 pilot providers who used a range of recruitment methods, including delivering school assemblies, open evenings, and direct engagement or referrals from agencies. Those who started their recruitment campaigns early tended to have greater take-up. Some 2012 providers have therefore already launched their recruitment campaigns and started signing up young people to participate in National Citizen Service in 2012.

As part of the planning for the long term roll out of the programme, modelling is being undertaken on likely future costs. This is drawing on available evidence from both the 2011 and 2012 pilot providers to better understand the costs of the programme, and the level of funding that might be required in future years. As National Citizen Service expands, the Government expects unit costs to fall.

In line with current practice in the 2011 and 2012 pilots, the Government does not expect to fund the full cost of delivering the programme. National Citizen Service is a Big Society initiative that benefits a wide range of parties across society. Experience suggests that many of these parties, including businesses, schools, councils and young people and their families are willing to also contribute to its success—and through it celebrate and mark young people's transition to adulthood.